Talkative Nixon Neighbor Bought Out

By Jack Anderson

The government persuaded one of President Nixon's Florida neighbors to give up her home, according to a classified account, because she had been "spreading wild tales of what was going on in the presidential compound."

The President's two favorite millionaires, Bebe Rebozo and Robert Abplanalp, joined the effort to remove the neighbor from the fashionable Key Biscayne neighborhood. She is Mrs. Perry O'Neal, a sweet, 70-year-old widow, who assured us she "loved the Nixons" and brought them roses.

She agreed to vacate her home to make room for the President's communications staff, but she didn't want to lease it to the government. Abplanalp quickly coughed up $150,000 to buy the house from her, and then he leased it to the government for $18,000 a year.

The Public Buildings Service sent Theodore Sachs from its Atlanta regional office to Key Biscayne to negotiate the deal. He met with Rebozo on February 6, 1969, and afterward submitted this confidential report of their conversation.

"Mr. Rebozo stated that this would not be the ordinary type of negotiation," recounted Sachs. "Mr. Rebozo stated that Mrs. O'Neal, who lived at 478 Bay Lane, was creating a problem for the President and for the administration by going around the island and spreading wild tales of what was going on in the presidential compound in Key Biscayne.

"Further, since the White House Communications Agency needed space in the compound for the communication operation, it was determined that the leasing of the house at 478 Bay Lane would provide the space required by the agency and would also solve the problem created by Mrs. O'Neal by removing her from the scene."

The widow was distressed over this account of her alleged tattling. "I never did any such thing," she huffed. "That's the worst thing I ever heard . . . I was a good neighbor, and I carried roses over to her (Mrs. Nixon) personally."

Sachs continued his story: "Mr. Rebozo further went on to state that since Mrs. O'Neal was not interested in leasing the house, he had contacted a friend of his, Mr. Robert H. Abplanalp of Bronxville, N.Y.; and Mr. Abplanalp had agreed to purchase the O'Neal home as a favor to the President and Mr. Rebozo.

"Negotiations between Mr. Abplanalp, Mr. Rebozo and the O'Neals resulted in a sale of the home at 478 Bay Lane to Mr. Robert H. Abplanalp and his wife for $150,000. . .

"Mr. Rebozo stressed the fact that Mr. Abplanalp had purchased the home merely as a favor and did not want to make a profit on it, but since Mr. Abplanalp had taken the money out of a company fund, he wanted a fair net return on his money, and a price of $18,000 as an annual rental had been agreed upon."

Abplanalp also objected to signing an agreement that would permit the government to use the house for any purpose it wished. Possibly for this reason, the Secret Service and the White House Communications Agency traded houses. Thus the President's bodyguard wound up replacing the talkative Mrs. O'Neal, and they have a reputation as the most tight-lipped men in government.

REID'S ANNOUNCEMENT—New York's blueblood Rep. Ogden Reid, who turned his back on 115 years of family Republicanism to become a Democrat in 1972, this week will announce his candidacy for governor.

The congressman, grandson of Whitelaw Reid who ran unsuccessfully as GOP vice presidential candidate in 1892, expects to announce first in Buffalo, then on the State House steps in Albany and finally, late the same day, in New York City. He faces a primary contest before the elections in November, 1974.

The national significance of the six-term congressman's race is that the presidential hopes of Gov. Nelson Rockefeller may hang on the outcome, whether he runs against Reid or not. Rockefeller hotly opposes him and a Reid victory would show Rockefeller weakness at the polls.

Rockefeller tried to beat Reid in 1972 by helping to finance his opponent and by lending him three top aides. President Nixon also sought to punish Reid's defection with an unprecedented 11-stop campaign in the district. Reid triumphed, thus further embittering both Nixon and Rockefeller.

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